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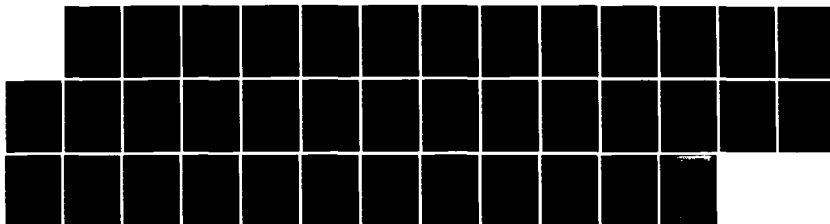
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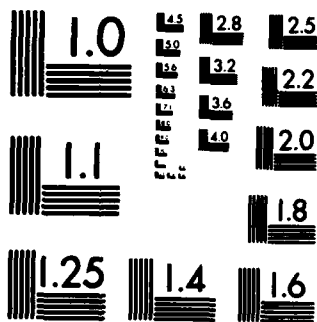
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THE CONCEPT OF SOLID SOLVENT AS PROCESSING AID

BY

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September 20, 1984

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The feasibility of such concept was examined using acetanilide as a potential solid solvent for polystyrene (PS) and Kraton 1101, a block copolymer containing PS blocks. Acetanilide demonstrated the essential features required of a solid solvent supporting the concept of solid solvent. It had a high solubility in PS at high temperatures very effectively reducing the melt viscosity of PS and Kraton 1101, and it precipitated out of PS at low temperatures although it had an undesirably high residual solubility. The concept of solid solvent appears to be a viable one.

**THE CONCEPT OF SOLID SOLVENT AS PROCESSING AID**

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## SYNOPSIS

The concept of solid solvent entails the use of a low molecular weight crystalline materials (LMC) as a processing aid. A LMC as an ideal solid solvent mixed into a polymer is expected to become a solvent for the polymer at high processing temperatures reducing the melt viscosity and thus enhancing the processability, but to become a non-solvent for the polymer at low use temperatures precipitating out of the polymer without adversely affecting the properties of the polymer.

The feasibility of such concept was examined using acetanilide as a potential solid solvent for polystyrene (PS) and Kraton 1101, a block copolymer containing PS blocks. Acetanilide demonstrated the essential features required of a solid solvent supporting the concept of solid solvent. It had a high solubility in PS at high temperatures very effectively reducing the melt viscosity of PS and Kraton 1101, and it precipitated out of PS at low temperatures although it had an undesirably high residual solubility. The concept of solid solvent appears to be a viable one.

## INTRODUCTION

One of the most important advantages of polymeric materials over other classes of materials lies in the easiness of processing. Polymers can be quite easily and inexpensively processed into desired shapes. Some polymers, however, possess a high viscosity usually accompanied by a high elasticity at the processing temperatures, causing processing difficulties. Especially, polymer blends and block copolymers with a multiphase structure often exhibit such behavior. A significant reduction of the viscosity at the processing temperatures is desirable to enhance the processability for those polymers.

Solvents (or plasticizers) are very effective in reducing the viscosity of polymers.<sup>(1)</sup> They can reduce the viscosity by a factor much greater than their weight or volume fractions, but they also adversely affect the properties at the use temperatures resulting in a lower modulus and a lower use temperature range, etc. unless they are removed from the products after processing. Thus, the use of solvents as processing aid is impractical.

The concept of solid solvent is to use a low molecular weight crystalline materials (LMC) as a processing aid for polymers. A LMC as an ideal solid solvent should become compatible with a polymer and act as a solvent in the liquid state above its melting point, significantly reducing the viscosity of the polymer, but should become incompatible and crystallize out of the polymer as discrete domains below its melting point without adversely affecting the properties of the polymer. A drastic increase

in the compatibility between a LMC and a polymer upon melting the LMC can be expected because the entropy of mixing between the liquid LMC without any structural constraint and the polymer is drastically greater than that between the solid LMC with the crystalline structural constraint and the polymer. A higher entropy of mixing results in a lower free energy of mixing, making the mixed state as thermodynamically more stable state when the free energy of mixing eventually becomes negative.<sup>(2)</sup> Several LMC - polymer systems, which exhibit the essential behavior as postulated in this paper for a solid solvent, have been reported by some investigators in their study of the effects of LMC on the physical properties of polymers.<sup>(3-6)</sup> Linnig, et.al.<sup>(3)</sup> found that crystalline organic compounds having a  $\beta$  - naphthyl group increased the modulus of various rubbers to a remarkable degree. In particular, 5% of phenyl -  $\beta$  - naphthylamine (PBNA) with a partial solubility in rubber was found to be comparable in its stiffening effect on rubber to about 40 phr of a good reinforcing carbon black. Joseph, et.al.<sup>(4)</sup> in their study of the reinforcement potential of LMC in glassy polymers found that acetanilide and anthracene were soluble in styrene-acrylonitrile copolymer (SAN) at high temperatures above their melting points but they crystallized out of the polymer at temperatures below their melting points into small domains of the order of 10 $\mu$  in width and length and much smaller dimension in thickness. From dynamic mechanical measurements, they found that LMC gave little reinforcement to glassy polymers and concluded that the elastic moduli of organic crystals were about the same as those of organic

polymers in the glassy state. None of these investigators, however, explored the potential of LMC as processing aid. Blyler<sup>(7)</sup> studied the effect of molding lubricants on the viscosity of ABS. He found that a fatty acid amide at 4 phr could reduce the viscosity of an ABS sample at 200°C and 100 S<sup>-1</sup> by 30% and that the fatty acid amide crystallized out of the ABS upon cooling. His results strongly supports the concept of solid solvent.

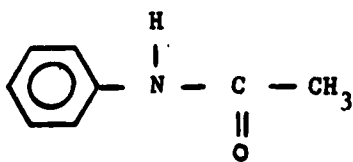
The reduction of viscosity by the use of an appropriate LMC as a solid solvent is expected to be significant for polymers with a single phase structure in the molten state. The reduction of viscosity by a solid solvent for polymers with a multiphase structure in the molten state such as block copolymers will be even greater if the solid solvent not only acts as a solvent for one or more of the phases but also promotes mixing between the phases. It is well known<sup>(8)</sup> that block copolymers made of incompatible polymers have multiphase structure, each component polymer being separated into its own phase. The multiphase structure leads to unusual physical properties, very different from those of the component polymers. A number of block copolymers is now widely used as thermoplastic elastomers.<sup>(9,10)</sup> Our study,<sup>(11,12)</sup> and others<sup>(13)</sup> have shown that the multiphase structure in block copolymers often persists to high temperatures of processing, well above the glass transition or melting points of the component polymers, causing unusually high melt viscoelasticity and consequent processing difficulty. Phase separation in block copolymers occurs due to thermodynamic incompatibility between the component polymers. As the mobility

of polymer segments increases (for example, with increasing temperature or by adding solvent), more mixing between different polymer segments will occur and eventually a homogeneous phase will be attained. Once the multiphase structure disappears, a normal melt viscoelasticity and greatly improved processability are expected. The use of solid solvent may allow processing of otherwise intractable block copolymers. The concept of solid solvent may also be beneficial to polymers with processing difficulty due to thermal instability such as polyvinyl chloride by permitting a lower processing temperature.

We have been investigating the feasibility of the concept of solid solvent, in particular as applied to block copolymers. This paper reports our preliminary results on the interaction between one particular polymer-solid solvent pair and its extension to one block copolymer.

### EXPERIMENTAL

A commercially available block copolymer, Kraton 1101 from Shell Chemical Company, was used as a model block copolymer in our study. Kraton 1101 is a styrene-butadiene-styrene (SBS) block copolymer, and it has the polystyrene (PS) block molecular weight of 11,000 each and the polybutadiene (PB) block molecular weight of 54,000 with 29% PS content according to Pillai, et.al.<sup>(14)</sup> The microstructure of the PB block is 45% trans 1,4, 40% cis 1,4 and 15% 1,2. The nominal molecular information on Kraton 1101 given by Shell is 102,000 total molecular weight with 31% PS content.<sup>(15)</sup> We have to work with an uncertain molecular information, but this does not interfere with the goal of our present study. The PS blocks and the PB blocks are incompatible and they separate into their own phases. Kraton 1101 exhibits an elastomeric behavior at the low temperatures of usage resulting from the multiphase structure and a highly viscoelastic melt behavior at the high temperatures of processing. The persistent multiphase structure in the molten state is believed to be responsible for the high melt viscoelasticity. Based on a previous study,<sup>(4)</sup> acetanilide was chosen as a potential solid solvent for the PS phase in Kraton 1101. Acetanilide purchased from Fisher Scientific Company comes as a flake but it is easily crushed into a fine powder. It has the following chemical structure and Fisher Scientific gives its melting point at 115°C.



The compatibility between PS and acetanilide was studied first using a commercial PS (PS-1) with a number average molecular weight of 86,700 and a weight average molecular weight of 229,800 and then using a PS fraction (PS-2) with a molecular weight of 10,000 which was comparable to the PS block molecular weight in Kraton 1101.

A Perkin-Elmer differential scanning calorimeter, model DSC-4, equipped with a dedicated microprocessor supplied by LMS, Inc. was used to measure the thermodynamic properties of the samples. The viscosity of the samples was measured using an Instron capillary rheometer (ICR), model 3211.

The polymer samples were broken into small particles, and mixed with the acetanilide power. For the DSC measurements, the mixture was packed into a sealed sample pan and heated from room temperature to about 180°C at 10°C/min measuring the heat flow. The sample was held at the highest temperature for about 20 minutes to allow acetanilide to diffuse into the polymer. The sample was then cooled down to a desired temperature at 10°C/min, and the second heat flow measurement was made on reheating the sample at 10°C/min. At the end of the second heating cycle, the sample was quenched down to a desired temperature by pouring liquid nitrogen at a nominal cooling rate of 320°C/min. The actual cooling rate of the sample inside the sealed pan would be less than the nominal cooling rate. It was hoped to preserve the interaction between the polymer and acetanilide in the molten state into the solid state by quenching. The third heat flow measurement was made on reheating the sample at 10°C/min. Other

thermal treatments were given to some samples for a more detailed study. All DSC curves were taken upon heating at 10°C/min unless noted otherwise.

For the ICR measurements, the mixture was extruded at least two times repeatedly at each temperature to insure a complete distribution and diffusion of acetanilide in the polymer. The melt viscosity measured from the second path was substantially lower than that from the first path for the PS-acetanilide mixtures, but the measurements from the second and third paths were about the same.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Figure 1 shows the DSC results of the PS-1 sample. The 1st curve was obtained from the initial heating of the sample as received, the 2nd curve after cooling at  $10^{\circ}\text{C}/\text{min}$ , the 3rd curve after quenching and the 4th curve after annealing for about 21 hours at  $102^{\circ}\text{C}$ . The glass transition temperature ( $T_g$ ) of PS-1 is found to be about  $106^{\circ}\text{C}$  from the 3rd curve. Although the thermal history has a definite influence on the hysteresis of the glass transition with a slower cooling rate causing a greater hysteresis, it has an insignificant effect on the location of the  $T_g$ . Figure 2 presents the DSC results of the PS-2 sample. The 1st and 2nd curves were obtained after  $10^{\circ}\text{C}/\text{min}$  cooling and quenching, respectively. The  $T_g$  of PS-2 is found to be about  $94^{\circ}\text{C}$  from both curves. Our measurements of  $T_g$  for the PS-1 and PS-2 samples are in an excellent agreement with the previously reported values by other investigators.<sup>(16,17)</sup> Figure 3 presents the DSC results of acetanilide. Acetanilide shows a sharp melting peak at  $116^{\circ}\text{C}$ , very close to the melting point ( $T_m$ ) reported by Fisher Scientific, and the thermal history has no effect on the melting behavior as expected for a low molecular weight material. We can conclude from Figures 1-3 that the thermal treatments used in our experiments will have virtually no effect on the  $T_g$  of the PS samples or the  $T_m$  of acetanilide. Any change in the  $T_g$  of the PS samples or the  $T_m$  of acetanilide found for the PS/acetanilide mixtures may be attributed to the interaction between the materials.

Figure 4 presents the DSC results for the PS-1/acetanilide

mixture with the acetanilide concentration of 5.97% by weight. The 1st curve taken during the initial heating cycle of the mixture shows that the  $T_g$  of PS-1 and the  $T_m$  of acetanilide are virtually unaffected by each other. All PS-1/acetanilide mixtures gave a similar result during the initial heating cycle. The  $T_g$  of PS-1 in the mixture is found to be 79°C, a large depression of 27°C. The 2nd and 3rd curves show no indication of the acetanilide crystal. The entire amount of acetanilide apparently had dissolved into the polymer during the initial heating cycle and none of the dissolved acetanilide recrystallized out of the polymer during cooling. The dissolved acetanilide could not be recrystallized by annealing.

The DSC results for the PS-1/acetanilide mixture with 18.9% acetanilide are presented in Figure 5. The 1st curve was obtained after cooling the mixture at 10°C/min. Recrystallization of the dissolved acetanilide around 95°C and melting of the crystallized acetanilide with the melting peak at about 112°C are clearly seen. Depression of the  $T_m$  of acetanilide by about 4°C is observed. The  $T_g$  of PS-1 in the mixture is found to be about 60°C by a repeated experiment using a higher resolution. In order to study the recrystallization mechanism of acetanilide, the mixture was cooled down to different temperatures at 10°C/min and the 2nd - 8th curves were obtained on heating at 10°C/min. The recrystallization mechanism is found to be a classic nucleation and growth of crystals for liquid to solid phase transition in a dense phase.<sup>(2)</sup> The mixture had to be cooled down to a sufficiently low temperature before the nuclei could grow, with

a lower cooling temperature resulting in a higher degree of recrystallization. The 9th curve was obtained after quenching the mixture at the end of the 8th curve. The  $T_g$  of PS-1 in the mixture after quenching is found to be about  $49^\circ\text{C}$ . It is clear that the entire 18.9% acetanilide dissolves into the polymer at about  $180^\circ\text{C}$  and all of acetanilide remains to be dissolved in the polymer upon quenching considering the thermal history and also comparing the areas under the recrystallization and melting peaks. The 10th curve was obtained after annealing the mixture for about 70 hrs at  $102^\circ\text{C}$ . It shows the  $T_g$  of PS-1 in the mixture at about  $71^\circ\text{C}$  and little recrystallization. In another experiment, the  $T_g$  of PS-1 in the mixture was found at about  $69^\circ\text{C}$  after simply heating the mixture to  $102^\circ\text{C}$  at  $10^\circ\text{C}/\text{min}$ . Apparently, the annealing treatment or even a quick heating to  $102^\circ\text{C}$  caused a large fraction of the dissolved acetanilide to recrystallize out of the polymer. The  $T_g$  of PS-1 in the mixture increases as the concentration of dissolved acetanilide decreases upon acetanilide recrystallization.

Figure 6 was constructed after a series of annealing experiments to control the amount of dissolved acetanilide. The amount of dissolved acetanilide was determined by quantitatively analysing the DSC curves. The solubility of acetanilide in the PS-1 sample at  $102^\circ\text{C}$  is found to be about 8%. Excess acetanilide above 8% dissolved in the polymer can be recrystallized by a simple thermal treatment. Recrystallization of the dissolved solid solvent is an essential requirement for the concept of solid solvent.

Figure 7 presents the DSC results of the PS-2/acetanilide mixture with 10% acetanilide. The 1st and 2nd curves were obtained after cooling at 10°C/min and quenching, respectively. The curves show the  $T_g$  of PS-2 in the mixture at about 62°C, a depression of 32°C, and the melting peak of acetanilide at 112°C. The observation of a large acetanilide melting peak without an accompanying recrystallization peak even for the quenched sample is interesting since it indicates acetanilide recrystallization out of PS-2 during cooling unlike for the case of PS-1. The solubility of acetanilide is expected to be greater in PS-2 than in PS-1 since PS-2 has a much lower molecular weight than PS-1. Lower melt viscosity and lower  $T_g$  of PS-2 compared with those of PS-1 are believed to have enhanced acetanilide recrystallization in PS-2 during cooling.

The DSC results of Kraton 1101 are presented in Figure 8. The heat flow curve clearly shows the  $T_g$  of the PB phase at -95°C. The PS phase gives a broad glass transition and the  $T_g$  is not easily seen from the heat flow curve. We found in this particular case that the  $T_g$  of the PS phase at about 79°C could be determined easier from the specific heat curve although it required more work of running a sapphire standard. Our values of  $T_g$  for the PB and PS phases in Kraton 1101 agree quite well with those reported by others.<sup>(16-18)</sup> The  $T_g$  of the PS phase in Kraton 1101 is much lower than the value expected for the PS phase by itself due to the effects of the soft PB blocks and the interface.

Figure 9 presents the DSC results for the Kraton 1101/acetanilide mixture with 3.1% acetanilide. The  $T_g$  of the

PB phase at  $-95^{\circ}\text{C}$  was not influenced by acetanilide, but the glass transition of the PS phase became very broad. The  $T_g$  of the PS phase in the mixture is approximated to be about  $57^{\circ}\text{C}$ , a depression of about  $22^{\circ}\text{C}$ . Although the absence of any acetanilide melting peak and the unchanged  $T_g$  of the PB phase in Figure 9 appear to indicate that all acetanilide was preferentially dissolved into the PS phase, we later found through melt viscosity measurements and solution tests that some acetanilide could stay in the PB phase and cause crosslinking of the PB phase at high temperatures. The extrudate of the mixture at  $130^{\circ}\text{C}$  dissolved in a solvent mixture for Kraton 1101 but the extrudate at  $175^{\circ}\text{C}$  did not dissolve. The effective concentration of acetanilide in the PS phase is unknown, but it should be less than about 10%.

Figures 10 and 11 show the effect of acetanilide on the melt viscosity of the PS-1 sample. It is clearly seen that acetanilide acts as a solvent to PS in the molten state and can greatly reduce the viscosity of polystyrene. 5% acetanilide reduced the viscosity of PS-1 measured at  $217^{\circ}\text{C}$  and  $3.5 \text{ S}^{-1}$  by as much as 2.16 folds.

Figure 12 shows the effect of 3.3% acetanilide on the melt viscosity of Kraton 1101. Our initial measurements were made at  $175^{\circ}\text{C}$  and  $200^{\circ}\text{C}$ , and we unexpectedly found that acetanilide increased the viscosity of Kraton 1101. Our suspicion of possible chemical reactions between acetanilide and PB was confirmed by solution tests. Kraton 1101 dissolves in a 30/70 mixture of cyclohexane and heptane at room temperature upon stirring. The

extrudate of the Kraton 1101/acetanilide mixture extruded at 175°C did not dissolve in the same solvent mixture, but the extrudate extruded at 130°C dissolved. It probably is safe to assume that acetanilide reacts with PB at 175°C crosslinking PB. Kraton 1101 is highly elastic as well as highly viscous even at 200°C. It is highly viscoelastic at 130°C and exhibits flow instabilities similar to a stick-slip phenomenon even at low shear rates. The shear stress goes through a maximum and a minimum almost periodically at a given shear rate. Such fluctuations are indicated in Figure 12. The addition of 3.3% acetanilide reduces the viscosity of Kraton 1101 by about 14% on the average and greatly reduces the stress fluctuation, an indication of reduced melt elasticity. The full potential of acetanilide as a solid solvent for Kraton 1101 could not be evaluated because of the complication caused by chemical reactions between them. However, our experimental results presented here taken together with the results of some previous investigators<sup>(3-7)</sup> strongly support the concept of solid solvent.

### CONCLUSION

The concept of solid solvent has been examined using acetanilide as a potential solid solvent for PS and Kraton 1101. The concept entails using a LMC as a processing aid. An ideal solid solvent mixed into a polymer is expected to become a solvent to the polymer reducing the viscosity of the polymer at high processing temperatures, but to precipitate out of the polymer without adversely affecting the properties of the polymer at low use temperatures.

Acetanilide is found to satisfy the basic requirements of a solid solvent for PS although it certainly is not an ideal solid solvent for PS. Acetanilide has a high solubility in PS at high processing temperatures very effectively reducing the viscosity. It precipitates out of PS at low temperatures following a classic mechanism of crystal nucleation and growth, but it has an undesirably high level of residual solubility. Acetanilide also is found to effectively reduce the viscosity of Kraton 1101. Its full potential as a solid solvent for Kraton 1101 could not be evaluated because of the adverse chemical reactions between acetanilide and the PB segments of Kraton 1101 at high temperatures. Although acetanilide did not behave as an ideal solid solvent for PS and Kraton 1101 in our preliminary study, we believe that it exhibited the essential features of a solid solvent. The concept of solid solvent will be further investigated involving other chemicals and polymers.

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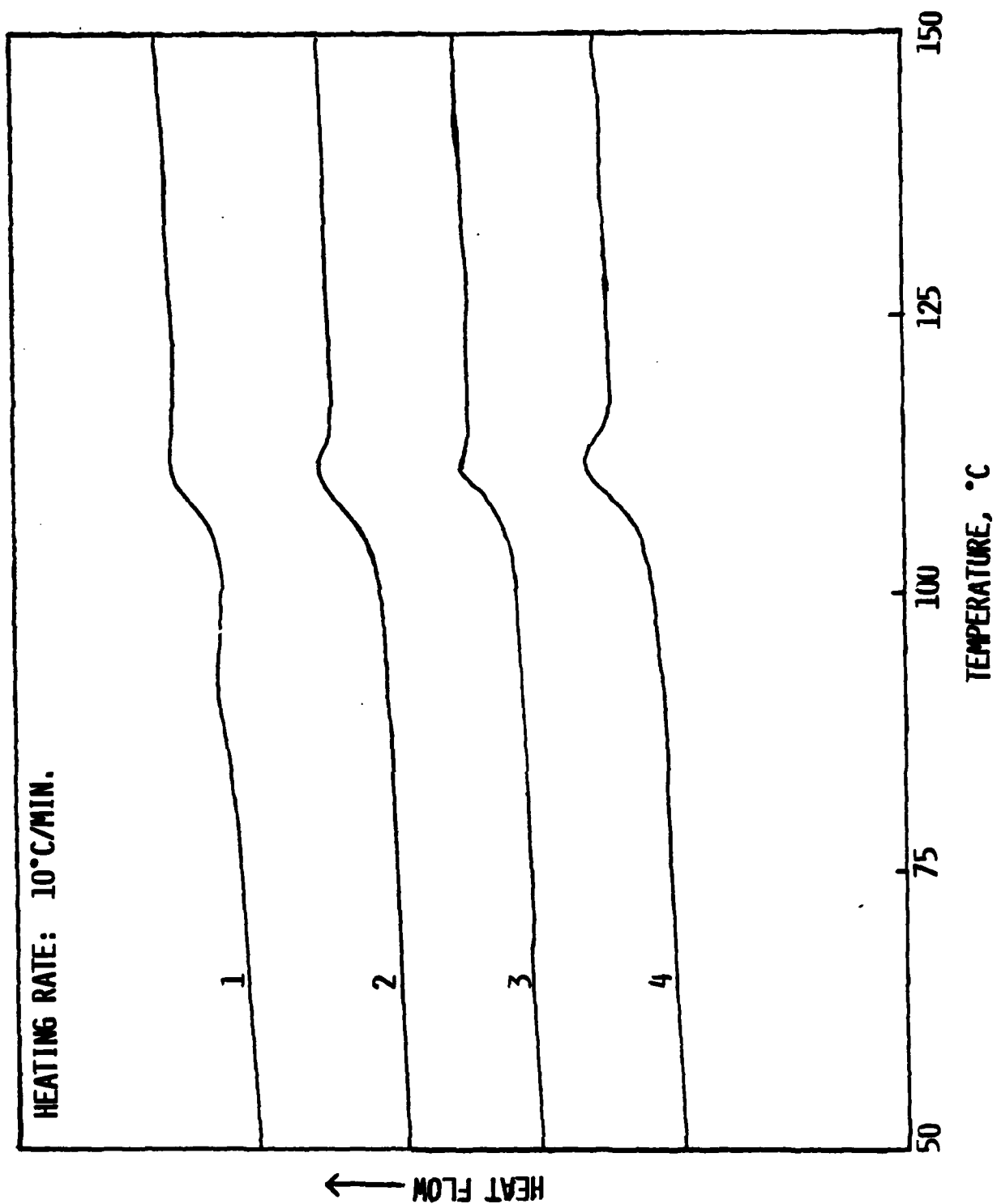
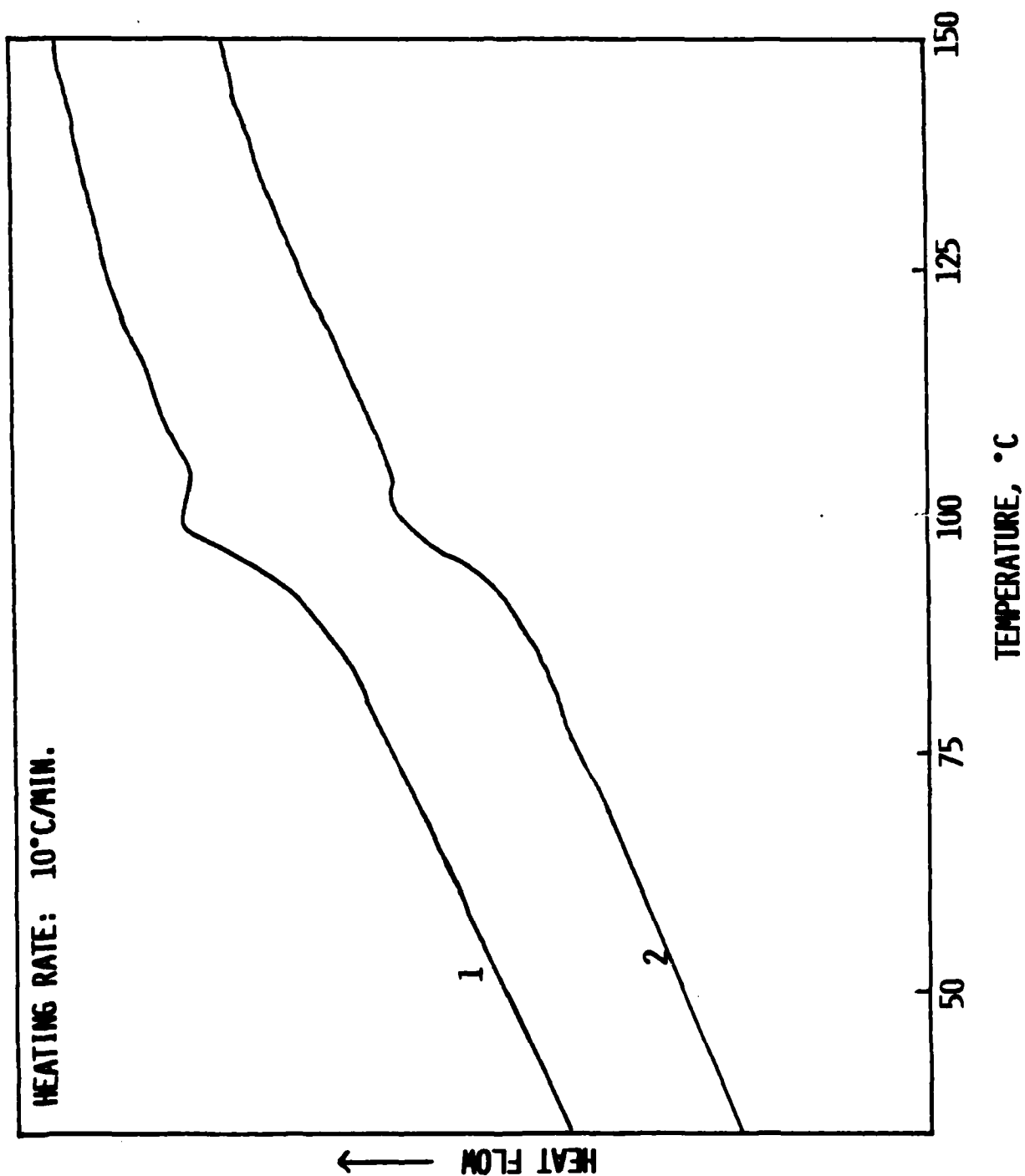


Fig. 2



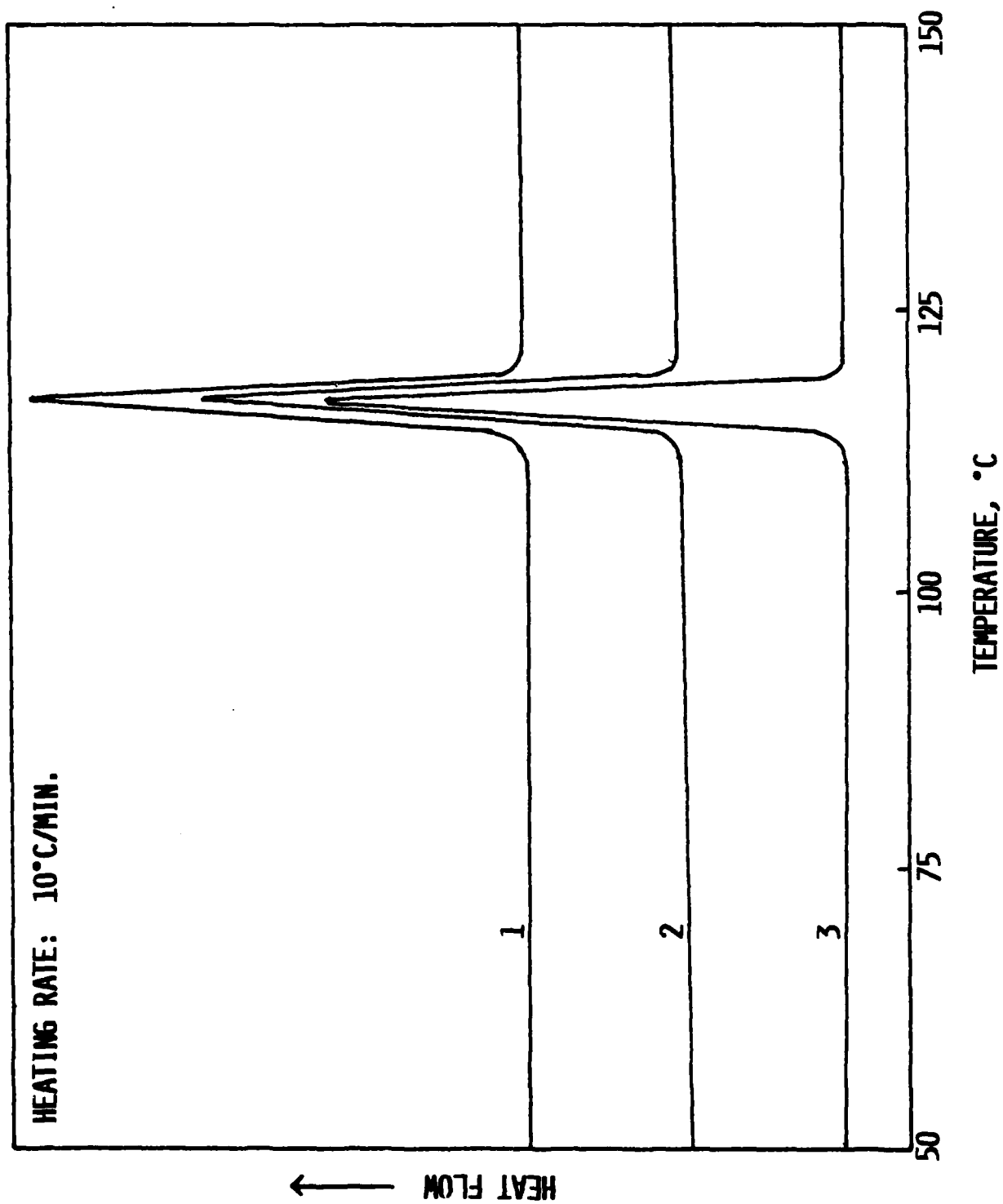


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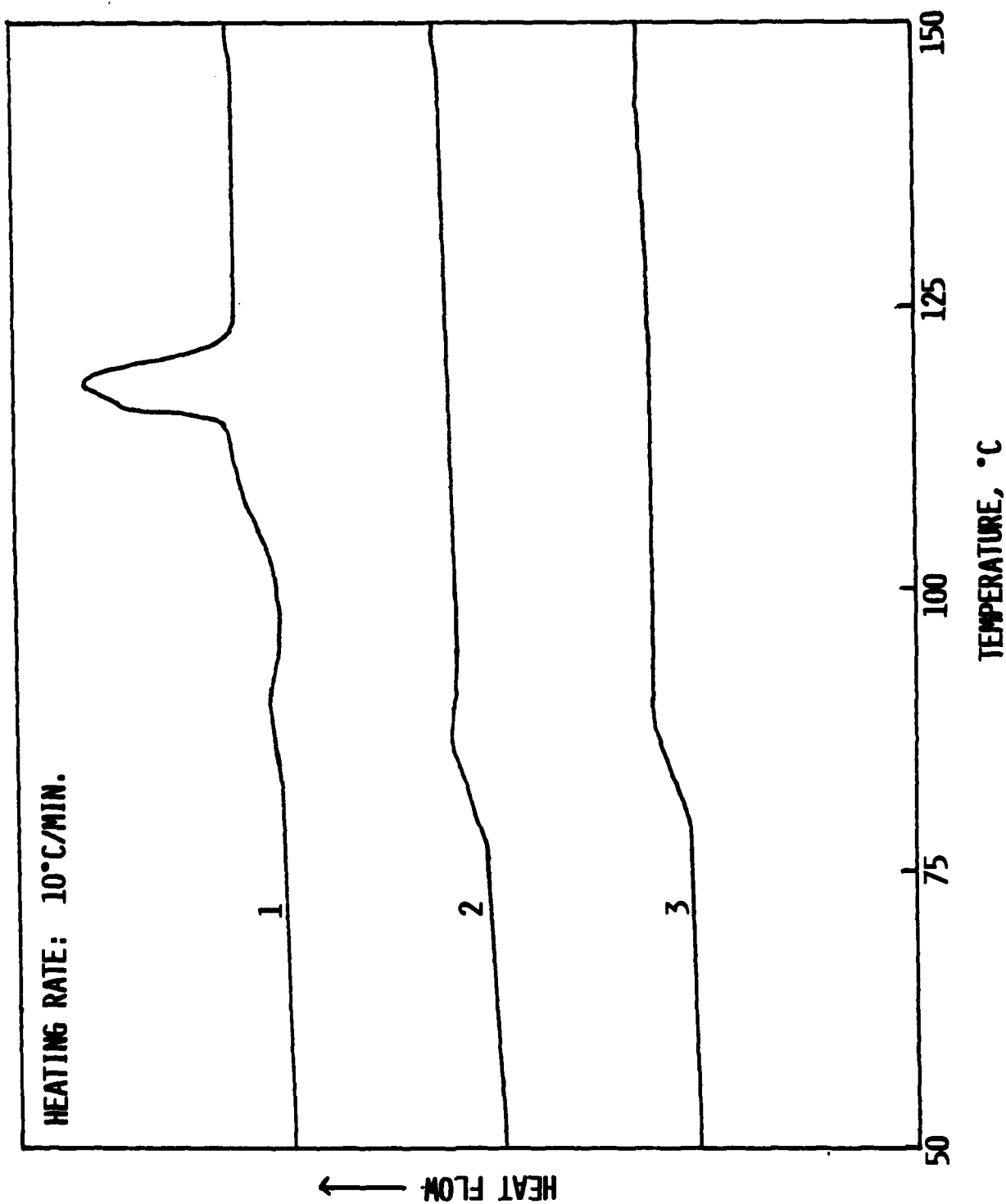
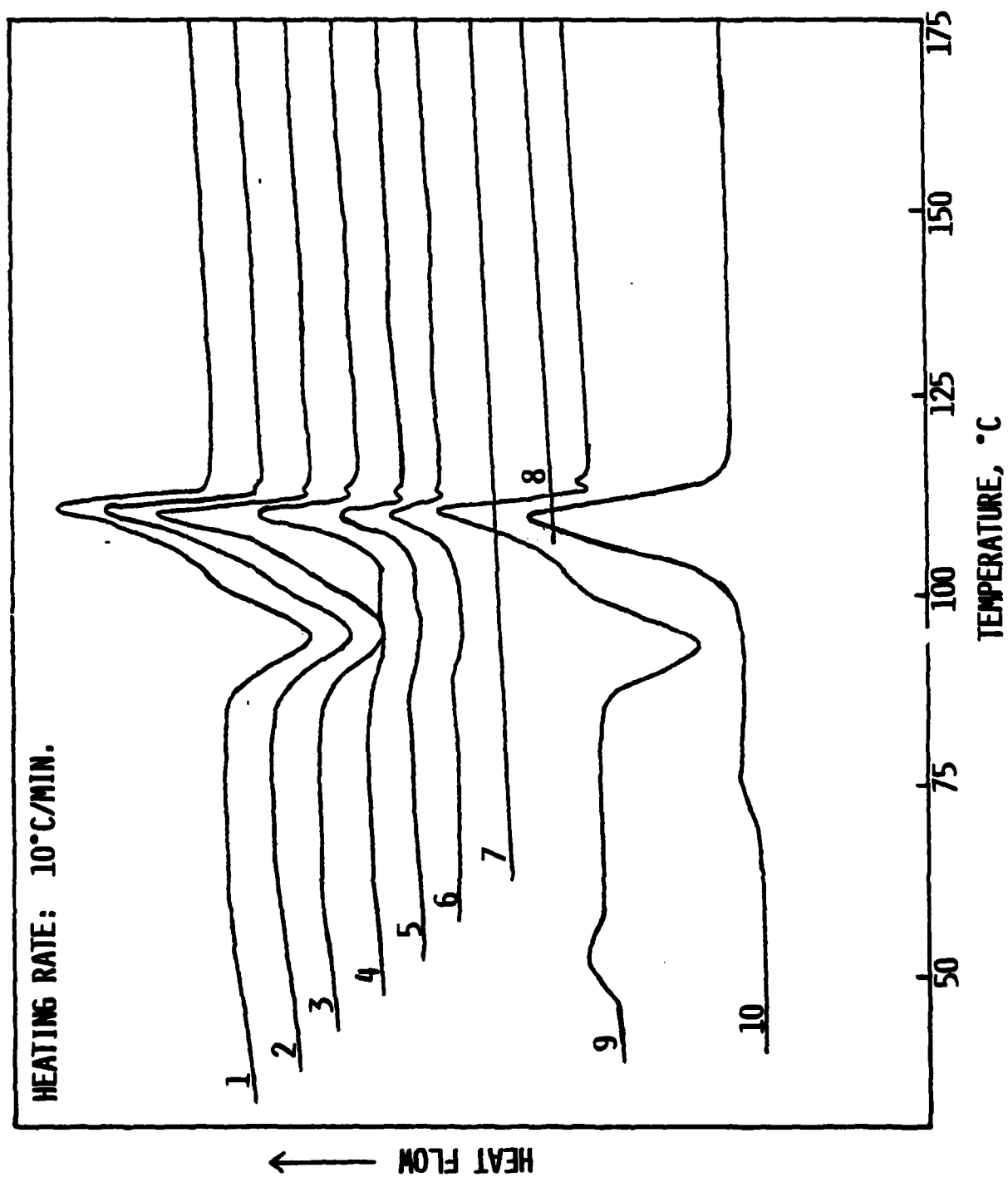


Fig. 5.

22.



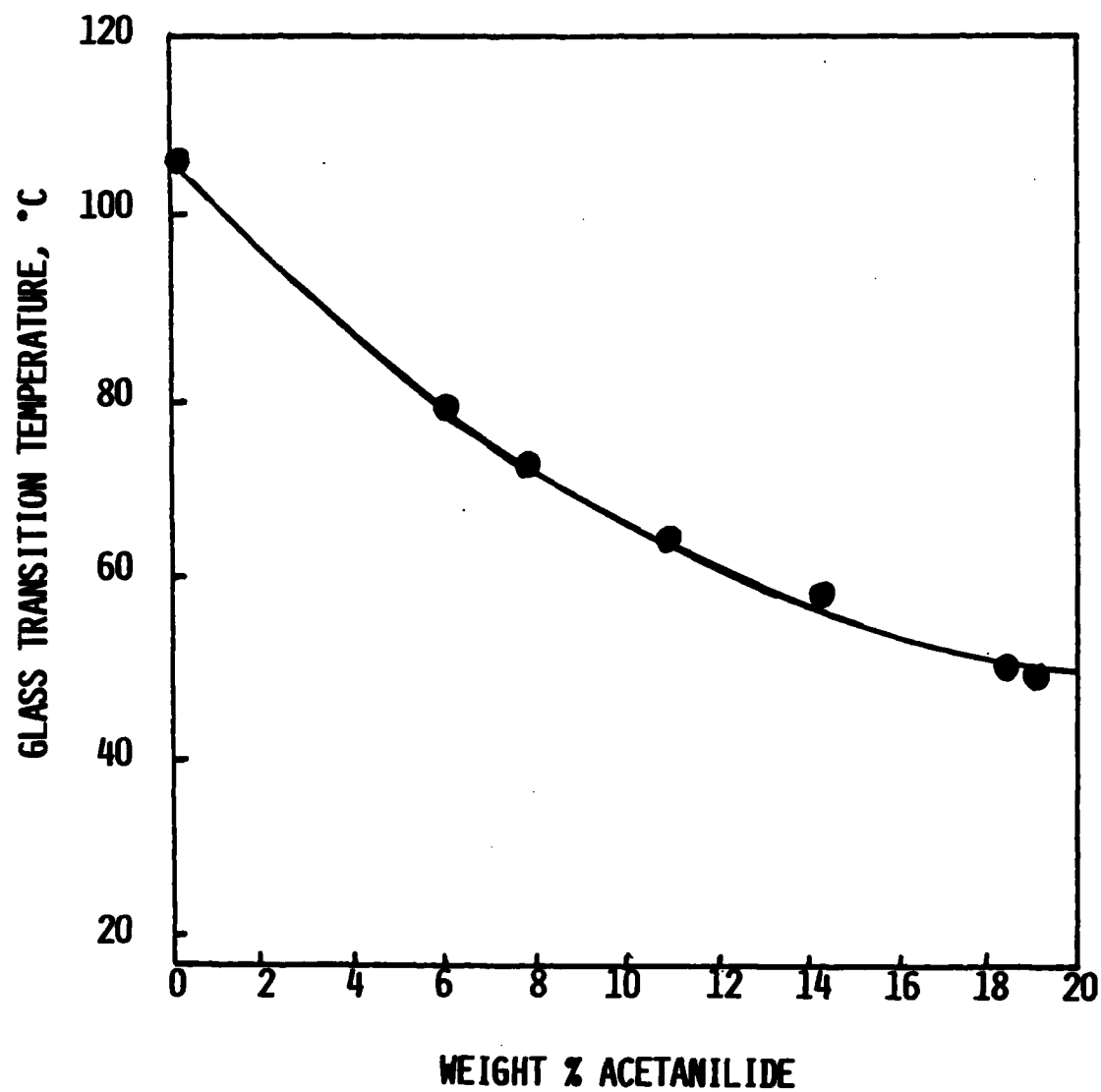


Fig. 7.

24.

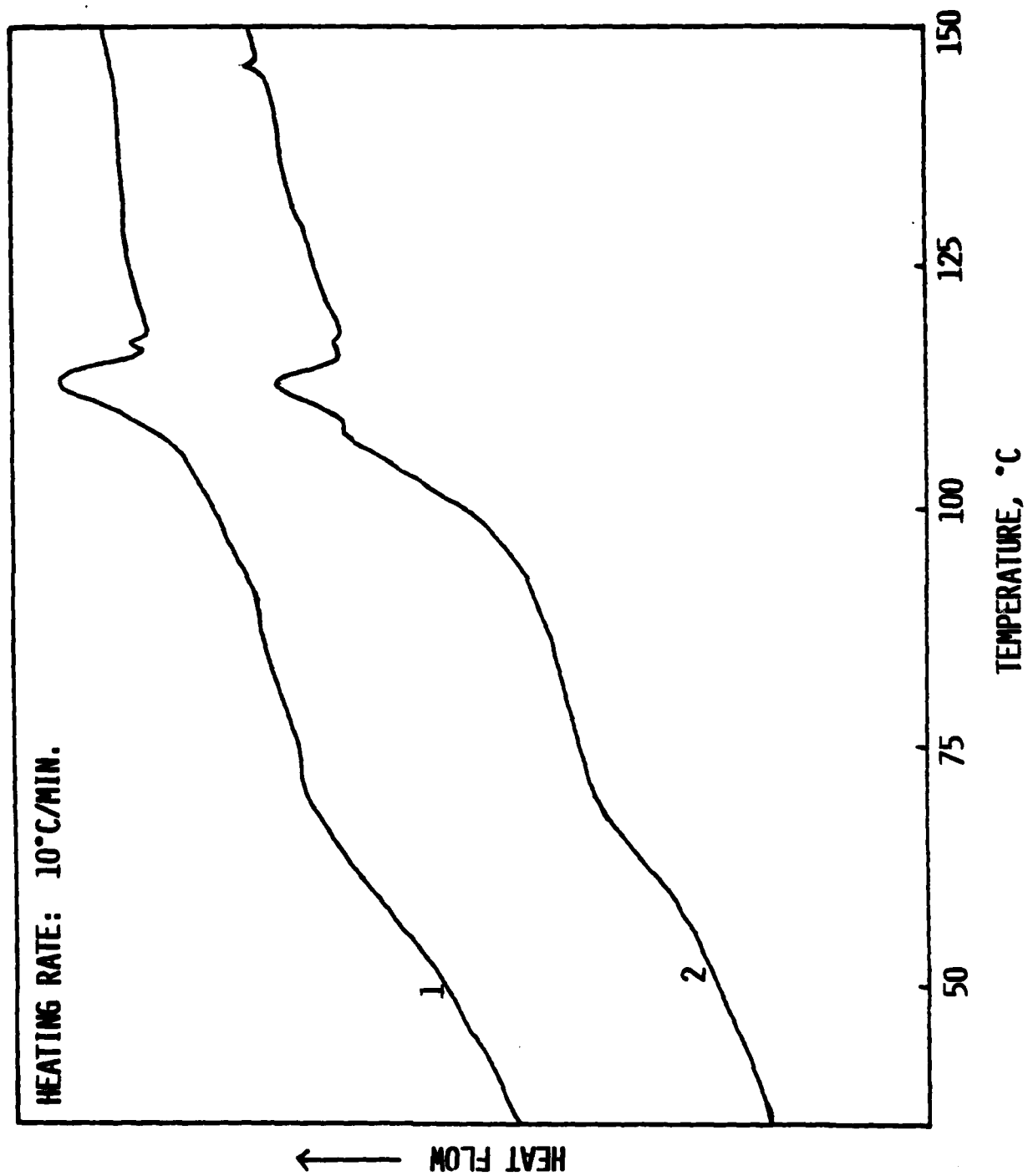


Fig. 8.

25.

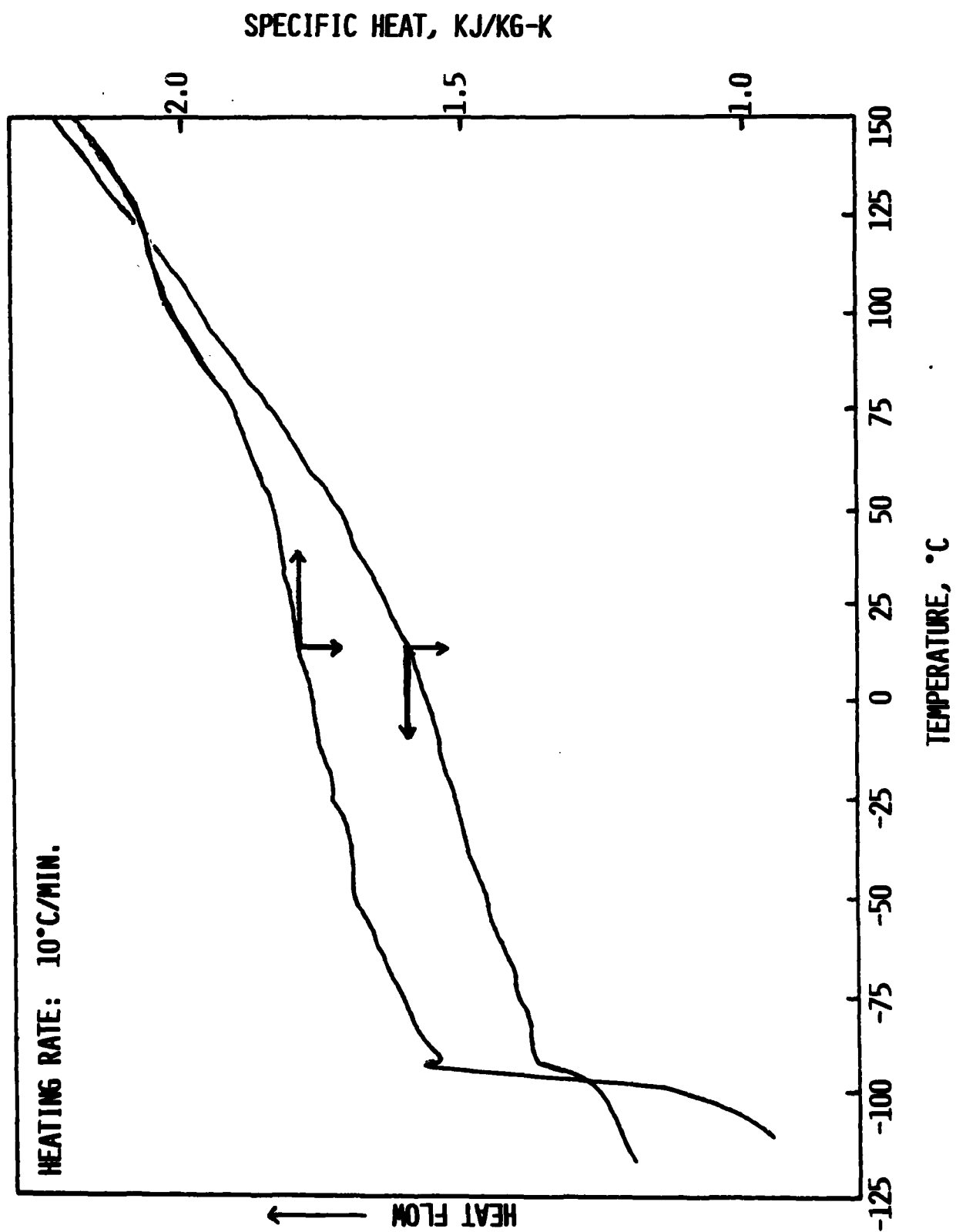


Fig. 9.

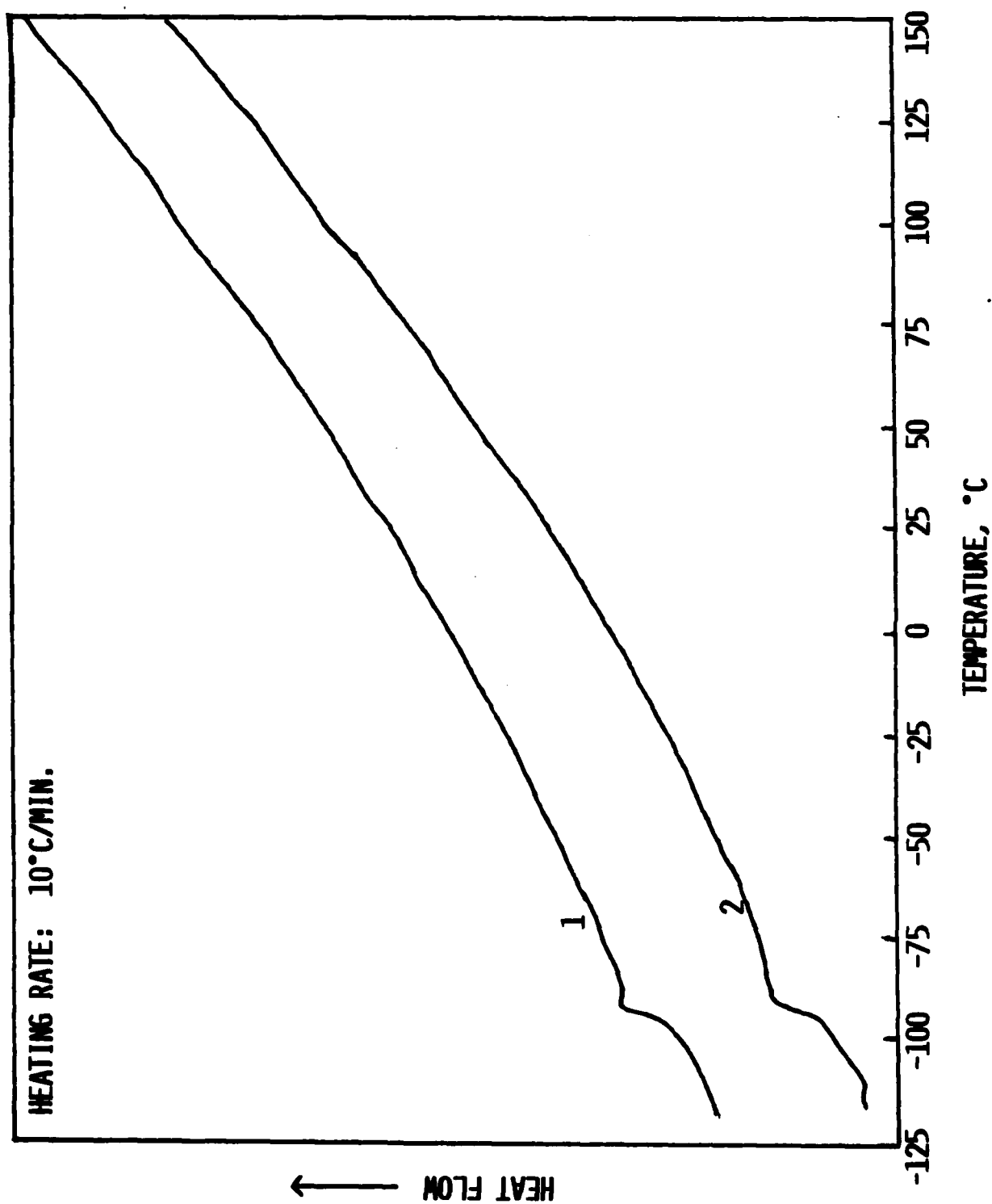


Fig. 10.

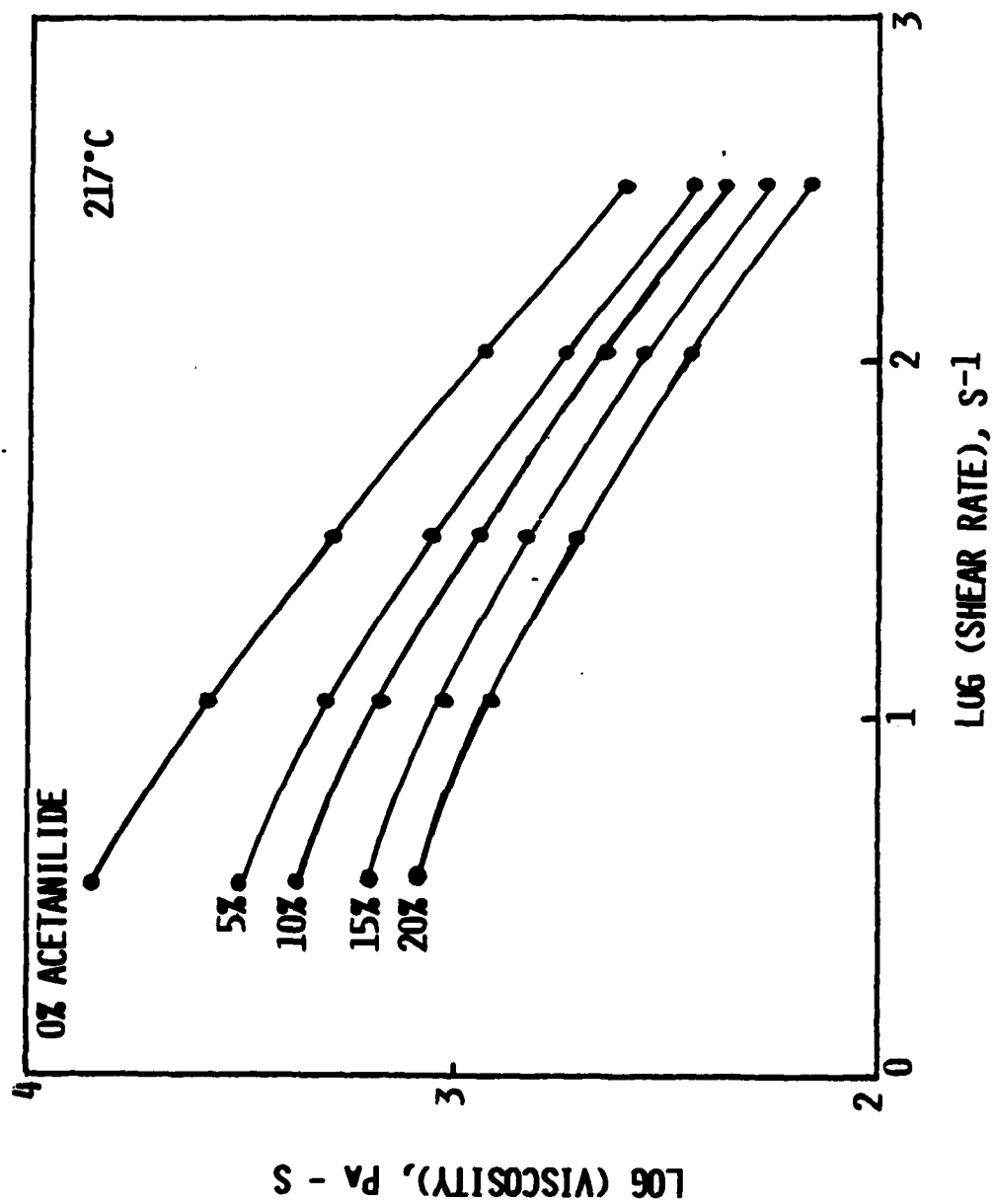


Fig. 11.

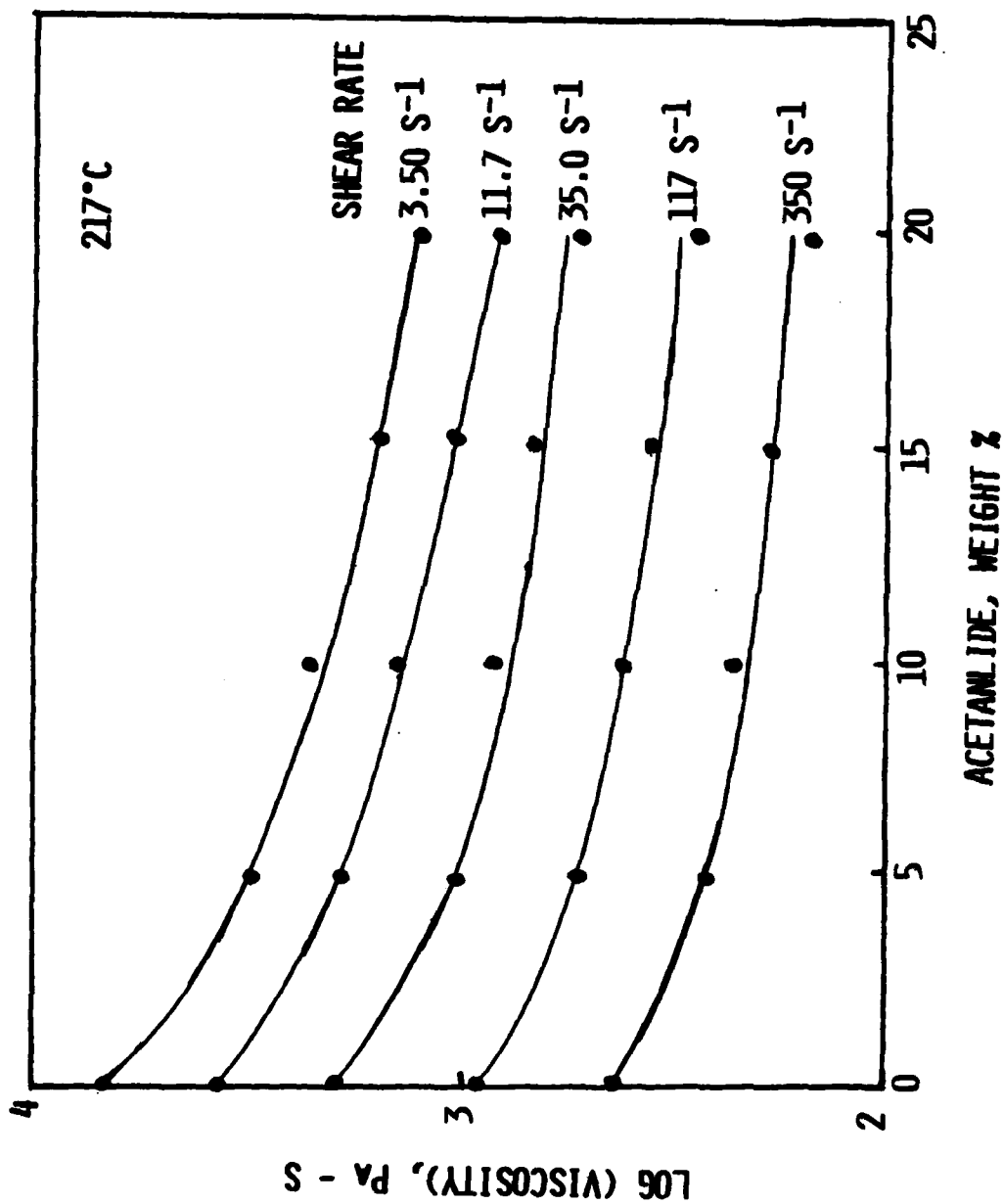
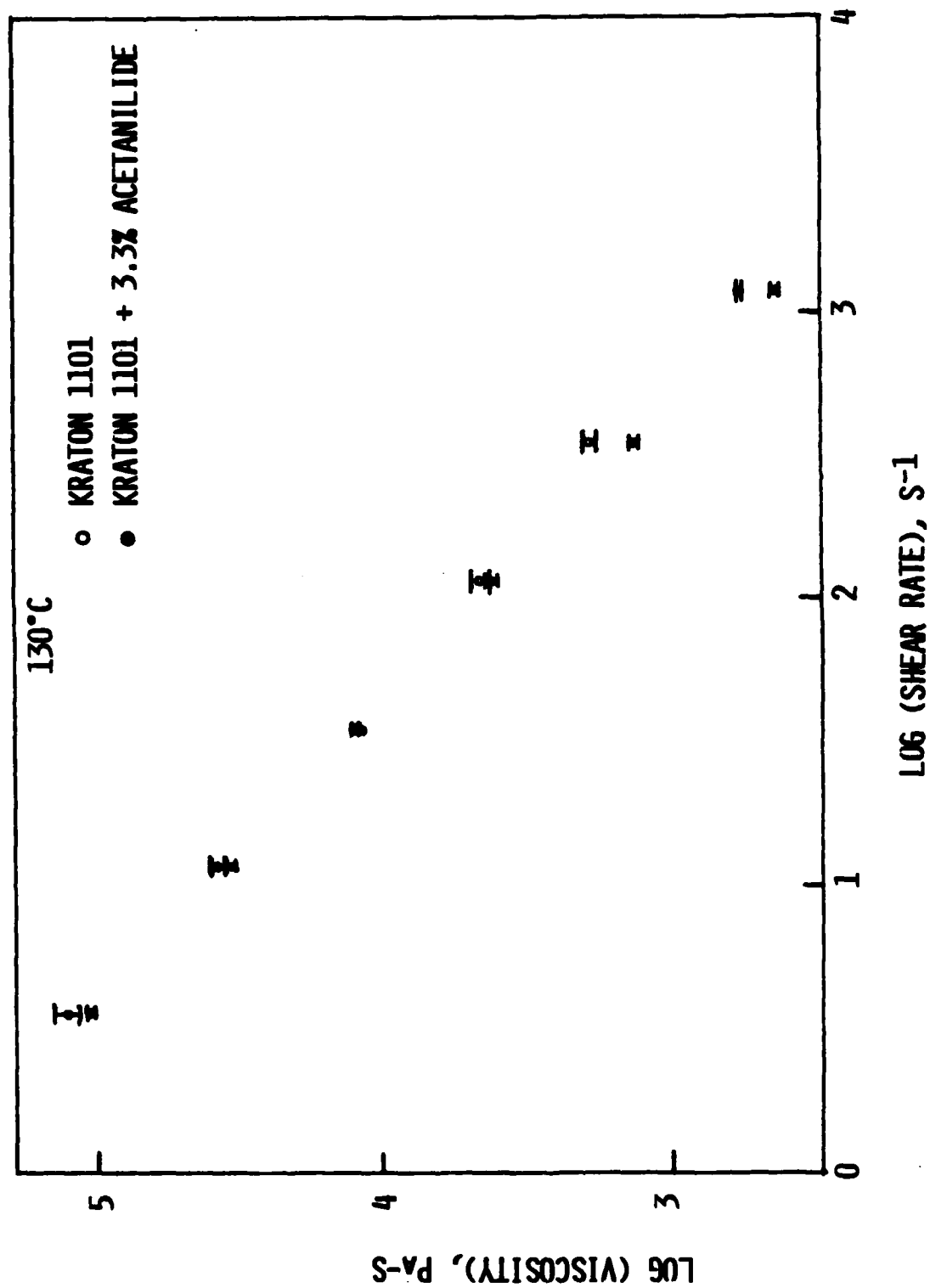


Fig. 12.



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